

5 books for ministry

selected by [Richard Lischer](#) in the [May 4, 2010](#) issue

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress). I would bundle this latest Lutheran hymnal with its earlier iterations, the most important being *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, as well as *The Daily Office*, published in 1965. They are the portable containers for the Psalms, canticles, prayers and the church's liturgical language, which in my ministry proved to be the most important components of every hospital visit, counseling session and private devotion.

Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther, by Martin Luther; edited by John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (Vintage). I was shaped theologically by Luther's exposition of the gospel, his sermons and his commentaries on scripture. What I find valuable about this book is its orientation to Luther's pastoral writing. One can hear his voice in the letters, sermons and treatises included in this volume.

Letters and Papers from Prison, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Touchstone). These letters remind me of the power of faith even in the direst of circumstances. They are exquisite lessons in living according to God's time and thereby discovering the essential person before God. They are also the best resource for dealing with grief and separation I have ever read, especially his letter of Christmas Eve 1943.

Congregation: Stories and Structures, by James F. Hopewell (Augsburg Fortress). The notion that congregations, and not just individuals and families, have stories opened my eyes to the congregation as a text that requires interpretation. Although this book was published after my service as a parish pastor, it has helped me train future pastors in their ministry.

Turning to Christ: A Theology of Renewal and Evangelization, by Urban T. Holmes (Seabury). This is an older book that reveals the broader goal of evangelization and sets our efforts into the context of the *missio dei*. Further, like most of Holmes's works, it is written in a spiritually nurturing style. I found it a wonderful antidote to the algebra of the church-growth movement.